

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BORDEA 00032 211147Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

/072 W

-----105767 211149Z /13

R 211025Z FEB 78

FM AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0705

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

UNCLAS BORDEAUX 0032

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: THE FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST

IF THE 19 DEPARTMENTS OF THE BORDEAUX CONSULAR DISTRICT HAVE

ANY COMMON POLITICAL DENOMINATOR, IT IS DISTRUST OF PARIS.

THERE IS A DESIRE OF PEOPLE TO HAVE MORE SAY IN THEIR OWN

DESTINY COMBINED, IRONICALLY, WITH A BELIEF THAT PARIS HAS

NOT GIVEN SUFFICIENT PRIORITY TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR AREA.

INDIVIDUALISM AND OLD FASHIONED RADICALISM ARE PERVERSIVE INFLUENCES.

THESE SOMETIMES MAKE POSSIBLE THE ELECTION OF RADICAUX DE GAUCHE

RADICALS OR INDEPENDANT CANDIDATES BEARING ONLY A LOCAL OR

REGIONAL STANDARD. THOUGH THE SOCIALISTS AND THE RPR HAVE STRONG

ORGANIZED SUPPORT, MANY OF THEIR VOTERS ARE VAGUELY DISSATISFIED

WITH THEIR PROGRAMS, PROMISES AND PERFORMANCE AND MAY BE EASILY

DISTRACTED TO A NEW AND ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE OF ANOTHER FORMATION.

THE SOUTH WEST IS NOT A PARTICULARLY HOSPITABLE TERRAIN FOR THE

COMMUNISTS, THOUGH SOME HAVE BEEN ELECTED. THERE ARE A GREAT

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MANY SOCIALIST VOTERS WHO ARE NOT MARXIST OR COLLECTIVIST.

THEY, LIKE THEIR RADICAUX DE GAUCHE TEAM MATES AND MANY OTHERS,

WANT CHANGE, INCLUDING A FAIRER DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND

INFLUENCE AMONG ECONOMIC CLASSES. - BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE.

CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST ALSO FAVOR CHANGE

IN THIS CONNECTION THERE ARE TWO POINTS WHICH MUST BE KEPT IN

MIND: 1) THE SOUTH WEST IS STILL MORE HEAVILY RURAL THAN MOST OTHER PARTS OF FRANCE. THE RURAL POPULATION HAS ITS PROBLEMS, BUT IT IS LESS IMMEDIATELY INFLUENCED BY PERIODS OF PROSPERITY OR DEPRESSION IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. THE RURAL OR QUASI-RURAL POPULATION HAS SUFFERED LESS FROM UNEMPLOYMENT. THIS POPULATION IS NOT CONSERVATIVE BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS NOT IMPRESSED BY COLLECTIVIST PROMISES. IT WILL MOST OFTEN VOTE FOR A MAN, OF WHATEVER PARTY, WHO SEEMS TO HAVE THE INTERESTS OF THE DISTRICT AT HEART. 2) MUCH OF THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE SOUTH WEST IS RECENT AND FRAGILE. THE INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION OF THE LATE 60S AND EARLY 70S ASSUMED NATIONAL PROSPERITY AND IT HAS BEEN HIT HARD BY THE NATIONAL SLUMP. IN PARTICULAR, MECHANICAL INDUSTRIES, THE AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY AND THE PAPER INDUSTRY HAVE BEEN HIT HARD AND HAVE SUFFERED CLOSEDOWNS AND UNEMPLOYMENT. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THESE PROBLEMS ARE LIKELY TO VOTE LEFT. THERE IS A THIRD, STRUCTURAL FACTOR, ALREADY EVIDENT IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS LAST YEAR AND IN THE CANTONAL ELECTIONS OF 76, WHICH WILL INFLUENCE THE VOTE IN THE SOUTH WEST THIS YEAR. THIS IS THE SPREADING OF THE WORKING POPULATION TO THE SUBURBS AND THE COUNTRYSIDE. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS FOUND IN THE TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE -RURAL 10TH DISTRICT OF THE GIRONDE, IN WHICH THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATE IS GIVEN A GOOD CHANCE TO WIN THIS YEAR. THE SAME PHENOMENON IS EVIDENT AROUND TOULOUSE, LIMOGES, POITIERS, ANGOULEME AND EVEN IN THE FORMERLY SAFE CONSERVATIVE STRONG-HOLD OF LA ROCHE-SUR-YON IN THE VENDEE.

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ALL THIS LEADS TO SOME PREDICTIONS FOR THE SOUTH WEST:

- 1) THE SOCIALISTS WILL MAKE IMPORTANT GAINS
- 2) THE RADICAUX DE GAUCHE WILL HOLD THEIR OWN
- 3) THE COMMUNISTS WILL NOT MAKE ANY IMPORTANT GAINS

EVIDENTLY, THE MAJORITY WILL LOSE SEATS. THE QUESTION IS, WHICH SEATS? MOST OFTEN THE SEATS LOST SHOULD BE THOSE OF OLD TIME RPR REGULARS. NEW FACES AND KNOWN PERSONALITIES WHO, THOUGH OF THE MAJORITY, REFLECT IMAGINATION AND OPENNESS TO CHANGE WILL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE.

THE QUESTION OF SECOND ROUND SUPPORT OF THE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT WHO RECEIVES THE MOST VOTES ON THE FIRST ROUND HAS RATHER SPECIAL MEANING IN THE SOUTH-WEST. MOST COMMUNISTS, WHATEVER THEIR PARTY TELLS THEM, WILL VOTE FOR THE SOCIALIST OR RG CANDIDATE AFTER THEIR MAN IS DEFEATED. SOCIALIST REGULARS ALSO WILL USUALLY FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTE FOR A WINNING COMMUNIST. BUT THERE WILL BE VERY VERY MANY PEOPLE WHO VOTE FOR A SOCIALIST OR RG CANDIDATE IN THE FIRST ROUND WHO WILL REFUSE TO VOTE FOR A COMMUNIST IN THE SECOND. THESE PEOPLE WILL EITHER ABSTAIN OR

VOTE FOR THE MAJORITY CANDIDATE IN THE SECOND ROUND.

FINALLY -- THE UNPREDICTABLE. THERE IS A PARTICULARLY LARGE UNDECIDED VOTE IN THE SOUTH-WEST. IF EVENTS PROCEED RELATIVELY CALMLY UNTIL THE ELECTIONS, A MAJORITY OF THE UNDECIDED WILL VOTE LEFT. HOWEVER, IF THE MAJORITY CAN RAISE ISSUES WHICH WILL SHOCK OR SCARE THEM, THEY MAY VOTE FOR THE TRIED AND TRUE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, CONSULAR DISTRICTS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BORDEA00032
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780077-1113
Format: TEL
From: BORDEAUX
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780234/aaaabcrd.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5e0c61d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3540715
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST IF THE 19 DEPARTMENTS OF THE BORDEAUX CONSULAR DISTRICT HAVE ANY COMMON POLITICAL DENOMINATOR, IT IS DISTRUST O
TAGS: PINT, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5e0c61d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014